



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Stewardship Council Meeting
May 25, 2006
Purgatory Chasm State Reservation, Sutton, MA

Meeting Minutes

Stewardship Councilors in Attendance: Chairman Dick Cross; Councilors Laura Johnson; Henry Lee; Whitney Hatch; Christina Crowley; and, Richard Ward.

Public Attendees: Dick and Jill Miller, Lake Cochituate Advisory Council; Carole Ann Berkowitz, Protect Our Water Resources (POWR); Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon; and, Jim Nelson, Friends of Myles Standish.

DCR Staff in Attendance: Commissioner Stephen Burrington; Tracy Lawrence; Tricia Singer; Marianne Fleckner; Tom LaRosa; John Pelczarski; Jim DiMaio; Bob O'Connor (EOEA); Nikki Belmonte; Joe Rotondo; and, Jack Donahue.

I. Call To Order (1:10 p.m.), Chairman Dick Cross

- a. Welcome from District Manager John Pelczarski.
- b. Chairman Cross reconfirmed three *Strategic Goals* which are: to have an agency capable of delivering world class conservation and recreation services; to demonstrate progress towards world class parks; and to generate public appreciation and support for the resources we manage.

II. Commissioner's Report, Commissioner Stephen Burrington

a. Land Acquisition

- i. DCR is struggling to protect in-holdings within or adjacent to parks. One recent example is a parcel in the middle of Willard Brook State Forest parcel costing upwards \$2M to protect from development.

b. May Floods

- i. 12" of rain in 12 days brought more challenges for the dam safety program.
- ii. Commissioner Burrington applauded Bill Salomaa and the Office of Dam Safety. All dams in the state are being registered despite initial difficulties identifying about 600 owners and lack of a standard form of filing with various registries of deeds. The Office is currently conducting inspections of DCR dams and establishing inspection schedules for other dams.

c. Park Openings & Events

- i. After a massive clean up, Nickerson State Park opened May 22, only one month later than usual. A new entry station was built with help of the friends group.
- ii. Beaches and wading pools will open Memorial Day weekend.
- iii. A controlled swimming event in the Charles is a possibility this year, the first such event in half a century.

d. Other Highlights

- i. A comprehensive 5-year capital plan was successfully developed over the past six months and presented to the Executive Office of Administration and Finance.
- ii. Commissioner Burrington applauded Marianne Fleckner and the finance staff, noting the enormous strides taken to update DCR's financial systems.

Councilor Lee inquired whether the Commissioner was confident with the oversight of non-DCR dams. Commissioner Burrington stated he is cautiously optimistic that staffing funds will come through for FY07, as proposed in the Governor's budget bill.

III. Committee Updates and Meeting Schedules

a. Finance Committee, *Whitney Hatch*

- i. Councilor Hatch thanked Marianne Fleckner for her assistance.
- ii. The Senate proposal was stronger and close to Governor's budget. Highlights include continued funding for FAMIS, support of Deputy Commissioner positions, \$950K for stormwater management (not full 1.5M), new RMP line item for \$600K towards FT staffing, and all but three Urban rinks recommended for long term leases.

Councilor Lee inquired whether there are significant disagreements between House and Senate. Marianne Fleckner noted that the House is historically lower than Senate because the Senate has the advantage of examining actual revenues.

b. Policy Committee, *Laura Johnson*

- i. The Committee met with Commissioner Burrington, Tricia Singer and Thom Dugan where the group sorted through a long list of potential policies, picking a handful of pressing external policies to focus on and discussing a proposed schedule of completion.
- ii. Recommendations for Stewardship Council business forthcoming.

c. Resource Management Plan Committee, *Henry Lee*

- i. The Committee has been focusing on the budget.
- ii. The Forefathers RMP will be presented at the June meeting.

VI. Approval of Minutes from 3/27/06 and 4/28/06 Meetings – *all in favor* with one correction to March minutes (add Heidi Ricci to list of public attendees)

VII. Land Taking Approvals, General Counsel Tom LaRosa

- a. 7-acre in-holding in South Hadley to be added to Mt. Holyoke Range State Park – *all in favor*
- b. Realignment of Cape Cod Rail Trail in Eastham; land taken at no cost, however \$100K needed relocate high tension wires and 3 utility poles – *all in favor*
- c. 3.1-acre Area of Critical Environmental Concern in Canton to be added to Fowl Meadow, connecting to the Neponset greenway – *needs 7 Councilors for approval, therefore not passed*

VIII. Forest Reserves, Jim DiMaio and Bob O'Connor

- a. Mr. DiMaio and Mr. O'Connor gave a presentation on the new Forest Reserves program, a system of delineated forest areas primarily managed by natural processes and representative of natural ecological and vegetative conditions.
- b. The purpose for establishing forest reserves is to (1) provide late successional habitat, (2) provide baseline information and (3) meet the public's social value of having unmanaged areas.
- c. Both large- and small-scale reserves representing the Massachusetts ecoregions were chosen using a set of criteria.
- d. Next steps for the program include generating standards and guidelines/regulations, and a public announcement.

Councilor Johnson congratulated Mr. DiMaio and Mr. O'Connor for the amount of work and partnership generation endured during this process. She inquired about the relationship of this

program to the Wildlands and Woodlands proposal. Mr. O'Connor stated that a continued balanced approach of establish reserves and working forests will be maintained.

Councilor Lee inquired as to how the program will successfully integrate various landowners into this program. Mr. O'Connor replied that Chapter 61 is currently being improved and applications for sustainable business opportunities such as ecotourism and cabin rentals are being accepted for 20-year spans.

Councilor Hatch inquired about the parallel work going on with the RMP program. Mr. DiMaio confirmed that the Forest Reserve and RMP processes are being completed separately, however the Berkshire Regional Management Plan that is slated to be completed at the end of the summer suggests 20% of the land be put aside for Reserves. This plan will feed into individual RMPs.

IX. Public Comment

- a. **Dick Miller**, from Lake Cochituate Advisory Council, stated that he believes delayed response on DCR's behalf is preventing the aquatic invasive plant situation from being resolved.
- b. **Mike Ryan**, from the Friends of the Fells, inquired as to when the Historic Parkway Guidelines would be posted. Tracy Lawrence hopes to have a press release on May 26 or 30.
- c. **Jim Nelson**, officer for the Friends of Myles Standish, read aloud a letter sent to the Stewardship Council, stating the Friends' discontent with DCR's lack of two-way communication in dealing with the cottage owners. Mr. Nelson would like the Friends to be treated as a partner through the OPPP program and requested reestablishment of communications. Mr. Nelson also stated the Friends' intent to help DCR again this summer by being the eyes and ears for the agency to help cope with the lack of EPO, State Police and DCR staff. This entails (1) acting as unofficial host campers for safety purposes, (2) using personal telephones to report fires, (3) make personal boats available for emergency response, (4) assist in search for lost persons and (5) assist with trash collection.

Meeting adjourned 3:15